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# The Representation of Islam in Western Media: The Coverage of Norway Terrorist Attacks

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## Abstract

Undeniably mass media have become the primary source of information and communication for the majority of, if not all, members of modern societies. The nature of the information thus communicated and the manner in which it is dispensed through media certainly have a profound influence on people's perceptions of the world around them. The relation between the media, on one hand, and culture, social life, and politics on the other, is an interesting one in which media fulfills dual functions, reflecting and also shaping issues occurring within these three domains (Bell & Garrett, 1998). In the initial media coverage of the 2011 Norway terrorist attacks, some western media authors, inaccurately and unjustly, held Muslims and Islamic groups as being responsible for the attacks. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study seeks to ascertain how language was manipulated in this coverage of the terrorist attacks in order to give expression to blind prejudice against Islam and Muslims. As findings of the analyses reveal, the tones of allegation in these articles and reports differed dramatically from one article to another ranging from tones of mere suspicion to those of overt accusation. The varying degrees of uncertainty or assertion of the authors' statements were reflected in the varied linguistic forms and devices used within the discourse.

**Keywords:** Media discourse analysis, Norway terrorist attacks, Islam, Western media

## 1. Introduction

News events media select to report (from among the numerous events and issues in current affairs) and the manner in which they are reported, have a fundamental influence on readers' perceptions of selected events or issues. According to Fowler (1991), "real events... are not intrinsically newsworthy, but only become 'news' when selected for inclusion in news reports. The vast majority of events are not mentioned, and so selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world." (p. 11). As consequence, the selection or the neglect of reporting certain events and the manner in which these events are represented are two major elements that can be used as an index of bias in media contexts.

### 1.1 Islam and Western Media

On the seventh of April, 2010 President Obama urged his advisors to omit prejudicial religious terms such as "Islamic terrorism" "Islamic extremism" and "Jihad" from the central document outlining the U.S. national security strategy ("Obama bans Islam", 2010), an action which best describes the Obama's government understanding of how mistakenly and irrationally these prejudicial terms have been used in the West to refer to all Muslims. The fundamental role of western media, especially in the USA and Britain, can be held accountable for planting seeds of prejudice and irrationality, and creating a distorted picture of Islam and Muslims in westerners' minds. Islam has been portrayed as a religion that breeds terrorism, violence, and global threat (Said, 1997). Consequently, Muslims are always held responsible for any terrorist attack occurring in the world and the Oklahoma City terrorist attack is a case in point. When it happened, U.S. and Canadian media agencies speculated concerning an Islamic connection to the terrible attack and Muslims were blamed for killing innocent civilians, a claim that turned out to be completely false as two fundamentalist Christians were eventually convicted of committing this crime. Many Muslims, especially American Muslims, were victims as the consequence of this malicious propaganda. The anti-Muslim representations in western media have been blamed for inciting many to commit violent crimes, offenses, and attacks against Muslims who live in western countries.

Unfortunately, some western media institutions have not learned this lesson as yet. In their early coverage of the terrorist attacks in Norway, some western media institutions speculated on an Islamic connection to the attacks while other explicitly accused Islam or Islamic organizations for the attacks without offering any evidence to support their stand. It later became apparent that the perpetrator of the attack was actually Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old Norwegian, who killed at least 85 civilians and injured many others ("Norway police ", 2011).

The present study will linguistically analyze the content of some western media and press coverage of the two sequential terrorist attacks in Norway in which Islam or Islamic organizations were allegedly accused or speculated as

to having been responsible for. The main impetus is to investigate how language was used to hold Muslims accountable for the attacks and what were the embedded implications and messages expressed within these news discourses? To do so, the present study will first rely on Van Dijk's (1988a) analytical approach to media discourse in order to give more insight on how ideologies and opinions are constructed and expressed within news discourse. Second, the study will use elective linguistic tools (referential and predication strategies, passivization, transitivity, scalar implicatures, quantification and modality), which have been proved to be fruitful in analysis of media discourse.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Media discourse has been a focus of critical analysis conducted by scholars from various disciplines: linguistics, semiotics, pragmatics, and discourse studies. Garrett and Bell (1998) attribute the interest in media discourse to four major reasons: firstly, media is a rich source of data that can be easily accessed for research and teaching; secondly, media usage influences and reflects people's use of and attitude towards language; thirdly, media can give us a clear insight into social meanings and stereotypes conveyed through language and communication; and fourthly, and most importantly, media reflects and plays an essential role in forming and articulating cultural, political and social life.

In the literature, there are many theoretical and critical frameworks that provide a powerful and practical approach to media discourse. "These approaches implement either completely or partially distinctive methodology in analyzing media discourse given the different theoretical grounds they are based on and the different lens through which these approaches view media discourse" (Wodak, 2001).

One of the most influential and widespread approaches is Van Dijk's *cognitive-structural model*. Van Dijk is a leading theorist and advocate of discourse analysis who has produced an extensive body of literature in the field including, but not limited to, the following books: *Macro-Structures* (1980), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1985), *News as Discourse* (1988), and *News Analysis* (1988).

Van Dijk's (1988) framework offers an interdisciplinary approach in which (1) social functions, (2) cognitive structures, and (3) discursive expression and production are all integrated to provide a comprehensive analysis of discourse. Van Dijk's (1988) framework is concerned with the relationship between the "structures of news, the process of news production, and the processes of news comprehension on one hand, and the social practices within which these three elements are embedded" (Bell & Garrett, 1998).

In this model, ideologies and opinions play an essential role shaping and comprehending news texts. Van Dijk (2005) believes that "the main social function of ideologies is the co-ordination of the social practices of group members for the effective realization of the goals of a social group, and the protection of its interest" (p. 24). Ideologies and opinions are both mental representations and beliefs, which do not usually reflect personal but rather social, institutional, or political interest. Members of a particular society tend to develop and maintain certain ideologies, which reflect the basic criteria that give this particular society its social identity. Moreover, ideologies play an essential role in forming members of a particular society's perception of what is socially acceptable or unacceptable or right or wrong. Ideologies, more importantly, determine the manner members of a society see and represent themselves in regard to members of different societies. When interests of two societies conflict, some societies' ideologies encourage polarization in which a distinction between the representations of *Self* and *Others* (*We are Good and They are Bad*) would be a common thread in the opinions of that society's members. Thus, van Dijk (1998b) stresses that "opinions and ideologies a particular society perceive as a 'truth' should not 'make them factual in our sense (p. 30)"

As far as analyzing the structure of the news is concerned, Van Dijk (1988a) sees news texts as consisting of 'macro' and 'micro' structure. The macrostructure refers to the 'thematic' structure (the overall content of a text) and the 'schematic' structure (the overall form of a text). The themes and topics of news texts adhere to the "relevance principle." Therefore, they are organized or ordered hierarchically in which the more general theme precedes the more specific. Texts' themes and topics are introduced to the text based on the schematic structures of the text, which are the particular order of the small units that a news text is built on.

Van Dijk (1988a) suggests how news report is formed based on what he calls *News Schema Categories*. News articles or reports start typically with one or more *headlines*, which are distinguished by larger font. Headlines are followed by leads, which are typically the first sentence of the article. The role of headlines and leads is important in introducing the main or overall theme of the text. Van Dijk (1988a) points out "This is vitally important because the topic acts as a major control instance on the further interpretation of the rest of the text" (p. 34).

The headline and lead are followed by *Main Events* (the main story of the news). Main events may or may not be followed by *Consequences* which, depending on their severity, determine the 'newsworthiness' of the event. For better understanding of the news event, readers often require a *Background*. Finally, there are categories such as *Verbal Reactions* usually by major participants in the news and *Comments* by journalists or the newspaper. *Comments* can take the form of evaluation or expectation of subsequent events. Microanalysis of news texts involves analyzing microelements such as lexical choice, clause grammar, and clause combination, semantics, coherence between sentences or propositions and so forth. Analyzing such microelements is fruitful in uncovering the implicit ideologies and opinions embedded within the discourse. In addition, other helpful descriptive tools are commonly used in media discourse analysis. These are: referential and predication strategies, passivization, transitivity, scalar implicatures, quantification and modality.

### 2.1 Referential and Predication Strategies

At the micro level of discourse, word choice is a good indicator of a journalist's attitude towards an event or agent in the story. Referential strategies refer to the word chosen to refer to the agent of the story. For example, there is a significant difference between saying "a terrorist was arrested" and "a Muslim terrorist was arrested." On the other hand, prediction strategies refer to "the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena" (Wodak, 2001).

## 2.2 Transitivity and Passivization

At the syntax level of the discourse, Halliday's concept of transitivity is a powerful semantic concept, an essential linguistic tool used recurrently in the analysis of representations (Fowler 70). In traditional grammar, transitivity refers to the syntactic difference between transitive and intransitive verbs in which the former requires an object (a) *Mark broke the window* and the latter does not (b) *Mark is swimming*. On the other hand, Halliday's semantic transitivity focuses on the semantics of the sentence (Halliday, 1994): the two verbs above (broke vs. swim) designate two different actions. In sentence (a), the verb *broke* designates an effect on other entity 'the window' while in sentence (b) the verb *swim* designates an effect only on the actor. In other words, semantic transitivity indicates the semantic relations between the *agent*, *object*, and *patient* in which the agent (actor) does an action, which can have an effect on object (thing) or patient (human). In passivization however, the role of the agent is deemphasized while the role of the object or action is emphasized.

## 2.3 Implicatures and Quantification

The concept of implicatures, coined by H. P. Grice (1975), refers to cases where the intended meaning of an utterance differs from what was actually said. Journalists may use implicatures in order to avoid expressing directly or explicitly what they mean. The use of implication is common in journalism. Another linguistic tool that journalists use to avoid being held accountable for their claims in the news discourse is the use of quantification words such as *some*, *many*, *almost* or *nearly all*.

## 2.4 Modality

Modal expressions are endemic and frequently used in mass media given their useful communicative or expressive functionalities. Fowler (1991) perceives modality as a 'comment' or an 'attitude' which can be divided into four categories: *truth*, *obligation*, *permission*, and *desirability*.

### 2.4.1 Truth

The speakers or writers use modal expressions (e.g. "Will/not", Could/not, Certainly) to signify judgments as a truth by indicating their strong commitment to what they perceive as true or to predict the degree of likelihood of an event or actions they describe.

### 2.4.2 Obligation

The speakers or writers use modals such as *Must*, *Should*, and *Ought to* in order to stipulate an action that ought to be performed by a particular person, organization...etc.

### 2.4.3 Permission

The speakers or writers use modal expressions such as *May* and *Can* to give or bestow permission for someone to perform an action.

### 2.4.4 Desirability

The speakers or writers use modal expressions to indicate approval or disapproval of a statement. This modality is explicit in a range of evaluative adjectives and adverbs (e.g. Right and Wrong).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 The aim of the Study

In this study, the above mentioned analytical linguistic tools are employed as an instrument to examine a selected corpus of media coverage reports of the attacks in Norway in which Islam (or what terms have been used to refer to Islam or Muslim such as Jihadist, Islamic terrorist and al-Qaidah) was held to be responsible for the attacks. The macro and microanalysis of the selected corpus aims to answer the following question: How is Islam represented in western media?

### 3.2 Data Collection

By using an advanced search mode in Google, the researcher ran a research for news articles and reports in which Islam and other Islam-related phrases were presented in conjunction with western media coverage of the Norwegian's terrorist attack. The search yielded thousands of hits. Irrelevant hits were discarded. After examining some news articles and video reports, the researcher was able to collect the appropriate corpus of the present study: a video report and a collection of new articles about the attacks.

#### 3.2.1 Video report

On "The O'Reilly Factor", a news show hosted by Bill O'Reilly on FOX News Channel, a guest host Laura Ingraham did a short report on the terrorist attack in Norway in which she said:

- (1) " In the 'Back of the Book' segment tonight, two *deadly terror attacks* in Norway, in *what Appears to be the work, once Again, of Muslim extremists*. In Oslo today, in which the noble prizes rewarded at least one bomb exploded *Ripping apart* buildings including the prime minister's office and *Killing* at least seven and *injuring 15*, shortly afterwards a gunman disguised as a police officer *open fire at Children* camp nearby though the authority said as many 10 people were killed in the shooting the man arrested in that incident has been linked to the bomb in Oslo. (2) *In the meantime*, in New York City, *the Muslims who want to build the Mosque* at Ground Zero *scored a HUGE legal victory*. A Manhattan judge dismissed a lawsuit by former New York City firefighter Timothy Brown, who was *Trying to stop* construction of the mosque. Bill O'Reilly spoke with a lawyer for the Muslim developers yesterday".

In this short news report, the Fox newscaster *Ingraham* reported two news events: (1) the terror attacks in Norway and (2) the huge victory scored by Muslims who want to build an Islamic center in Ground Zero, NYC. As far as the thematic structure of the news report is concerned, the cohesion between the two unrelated news events was constructed by creating a shared ground: Muslims who were the agents of the two events around which the two news stories revolve.

In (1), *Ingraham* did a brief report on the two terrorist attacks in Norway in which many innocent civilians, including children, were killed. The two attacks were massive and horrific and have been described by many as the deadliest attack on Norwegian soil since World War II. At the time when this report was made, the Norwegian police had not yet arrested Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old Norwegian, who was later charged for both attacks. Yet, before it was all clear, *Ingraham* made a fallacious accusation in which she held Muslim extremists responsible for these terrorist attacks. She began her report by saying:

- (3) In the 'Back of the Book' segment tonight, two deadly terror attacks in Norway, in what Appears to be the work, once Again, of Muslim extremists.

Although the main verb of the sentence (appear) denotes a suspicion and doubt, yet the horrific accident (deadly terror attacks) was clearly attributed to Muslim extremists in (3). The inclusion of *Muslim extremists* (the agent of the sentence) along with the phrase *two deadly terror attacks* (the consequence) in one short single sentence, as opposed to, for example, a long wordy sentence, has strengthened the alleged Muslim extremists' involvement in the accident. Moreover, the use of the phrase "once again" is aimed to increase the likelihood of the assumption by making out that terrorist attacks are distinctively Islamic violent behavior; hence the Norwegian attacks are merely one of many attacks carried out by Muslims terrorists around the world.

As a typical news report, the above news report adheres to the conventional manner of reporting a news event in media in which a newscaster presents a news event in a continuous flow while only highlighting or stressing/ intensifying (by rising intonation) the keywords (capitalized in the text) in order to direct the listeners' or viewers' attention to them. Undeniably, word choices are of a great importance to any analysis of discourse, as they would weigh heavily on interpretation of the main message. As Muslim extremists were fallaciously held accountable for the terrorist attacks in the first sentence, then word choice used to describe the terror attacks and their consequences in the rest of the passage would, in fact, describe what was done by alleged Muslim extremists. Considering that the newscaster used the following words: '*deadly terror attack*', '*ripping apart buildings*', '*killing*', '*injuring*' and '*open fire at children's camp*.'

The main impetus of fallaciously holding Muslims accountable for the Norway terror attacks would become more obvious by analyzing the second reported piece of news. In (2), the newscaster made a reference to the controversial debate over the project of building an Islamic center (Mosque) at Ground Zero. In her report, she highlighted the HUGE legal victory scored by the Muslims who want to build Mosque at Ground Zero and to the unsuccessful attempt by former New York City firefighter Timothy Brown who wanted to stop the construction of the mosque. Considering that, the false and irrational accusation leveled against Muslims and the false and misleading portrayal of Muslims as an imminent threat in (1) is aimed to deliberately incite the public to stand against the construction of the mosque at Ground Zero.

### 3.2.3 News articles and blogs

The authors of the news articles and blogs analyzed in the present study were in a complete agreement on expressing negative attitudes and sentiments towards Islam. Within the discourse of their news articles or blogs, the authors made either implicit or explicit statements in which they allegedly accused Muslims or Islamic groups for the terrorist attacks in Norway. Some of these articles were live news coverage published in the aftermath of the terror accident while other articles and blogs were a commentary, published at least a day after the incident had occurred.

The headlines and the leads are in the very essence of analyzing the discourse of a news article as they reflect the main message of the text. As far as the focus of the present study is concerned, the headlines and leads were not biased towards Islam. A plausible reason for that is Islam, in fact, was not in the scope of these articles.

- *At Least 80 Dead in Norway Shooting* [The NY times]
- *Evil in Norway* [Washington post]

- *Norway Bombing* [Washington post]
- *Norway Attacks Suggest Political Motive* [Guardian]
- *Norway Attacks Rolling Coverage – Friday 22 July 2011* [Guardian]

However, within the discourse, the authors expressed anti-Islamic sentiments and attitudes. The tone of allegation was dramatically different from one article to another ranging from a mere suspicion to an overt accusation. The varying degrees of uncertainty or affirmation of the authors' statements were reflected in the varied linguistic forms and devices they used within the discourse. In the following statements, the news authors speculated an Islamic connection to the accidents:

- (4) Initial reports focused on the possibility of Islamic militants, in particular Ansar al-Jihad al-Alami, or Helpers of the Global Jihad, cited by some analysts as claiming responsibility for the attacks. American officials said the group was previously unknown and might not even exist. *There was ample reason for concern that terrorists might be responsible.* In 2004 and again in 2008, the No. 2 leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahri, who took over after the death of Osama bin Laden, threatened Norway because of its support of the American-led NATO military operation in Afghanistan. Norway has about 550 soldiers and three medevac helicopters in northern Afghanistan, a Norwegian defense official said. [The NY times]
- (5) The re-appearance of an apparently large scale and co-ordinated terrorist attack in a European capital raises the inevitable questions of who was behind it. *The most tempting and immediate conclusion was that it would be a jihadist group, as the style of the Oslo attack bore strong similarities to other earlier attacks in Europe and elsewhere.* [Guardian]

In (4), the author made reference to the possibility suggested by *some analysts* (although they were not mentioned) that Helpers of the Global Jihad, Islamic militants, were responsible for the terrorist attacks. In less assertive tone, the author believed that "*There was ample reason for concern that terrorists [Islamic militants] might be responsible.*" Thus, he gave his own reasons to consolidate the likelihood of the Islamic militants' involvement in the attacks although American officials indicated that "the group was previously unknown and might not even exist."

Similarly, the author in (5) suspected an involvement of a Jihadist group in the accident. He attributed that to the similarity between the Oslo attacks and the other earlier attacks carried out by Jihadist group in Europe and elsewhere. Moreover, the author ruled out the possibility that the terrorist attacks were executed by an individual as he described the attack as a "*large scale and co-ordinated terrorist attack*"

On the other hand, other news articles used a more confirmative language in order to hold Muslims responsible for the terrorist attacks. Within these news articles the authors made explicit statements and clear accusations as in the following statements:

- (6) One thing is certain, however and that is the perception in Norway's security services that *Islamist terrorism is a bigger threat than the almost unheard domestic terrorism*, despite the existence of far right and anarchist groups who of late are alleged to have improved their international contacts. [Guardian]
- (7) Just one year ago, authorities in Oslo broke up an al Qaeda-directed bomb plot that originated in northern Pakistan. Good intelligence, including intercepted emails between an al Qaeda planner and the Oslo cell, prevented the plotters from assembling and launching their bomb. . . . *Oslo was not as fortunate today . . .* [Washington post]
- (8) It has been known for some time that al-Qaida core and other related "franchises" - including in the most active in Yemen – have been attempting to develop operations. Which leads to a second question: *why Norway?* [Guardian]
- (9) We don't know if al Qaeda was directly responsible for today's events, *but in all likelihood the attack was launched by part of the jihadist hydra.* Prominent jihadists have already claimed online that the attack is payback for Norway's involvement in the war in Afghanistan. [Washington post]
- (10) Moreover, *there is a specific jihadist connection here:* "Just nine days ago, Norwegian authorities filed charges against Mullah Krekar, an infamous al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist who, with help from Osama bin Laden, founded Ansar al Islam – a branch of al Qaeda in northern Iraq – in late 2001." [Washington post]

In (6), the author did not only accuse Muslim for the terrorist attacks but also for being a serious threat, which he believes bigger than any domestic terrorism. The author started his statement by using an expression modal (*one thing is certain*) which denotes a certainty and truth. The author's impetus for using such a term is to show his absolute certainty and confidence concerning the subject matter mentioned, leaving readers with no need to further investigate the truthfulness of his statements.

Although the authors in (7) and (8) used less straightforward language to held Muslim accountable for the attacks, yet the embedded message was not difficult to uncover. At the beginning of their statements both authors provided similar



*compelling* reasons to strengthen their assumptions. In (7), the author mentioned that the Norwegian authorities and good intelligence had succeeded in preventing catastrophic attacks from occurring once they had discovered an Al Qaeda-directed bomb plot just a year before the terrorist attacks occurred. Similarly, the author in (8) made it clear that al-Qaida core and other related "franchises" have been attempting to develop operations and had ultimately succeeded in attacking Norway (*why Norway?*).

The statements in (9) and (10) followed the same pattern (which was also attested in the previous statements) in which the authors made a claim and provided unfounded explanations to support it. In (9), for example, the author began his statement expressing his uncertainty concerning Jihadist' involvement in the incident (We don't know if Al Qaeda was directly responsible for today's events) and then he claimed (but in all likelihood the attack was launched by part of the jihadist hydra) which was made plausible by stating that "prominent jihadists have already claimed online that the attack is payback for Norway's involvement in the war in Afghanistan."

In (10), the author used an assertive tone (*there is a specific jihadist connection here*) to accuse Jihadist for the terrorist attacks. The author supported his claim by indicating that:

*"the Norwegian authorities filed charges against Mullah Krekar, an infamous al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist who, with help from Osama bin Laden, founded Ansar al Islam – a branch of al Qaeda in northern Iraq – in late 2001."*

In this statement, the author used the charges filed against *Mullah Krekar* in Norway prior to the attack in order to validate his claim. The author depicted *Mullah Krekar* as an infamous Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist and associated him with Osama bin Laden in order to portray him as a dangerous person capable of carrying out terrorist attacks.

#### 4. Discussion

While myriad sources of information contribute to the discordant image of Islam and Muslims in western public perceptions, many scholars argue the media are the most influential (Kanso & Nelson, 2010). The negative representation of and the dissemination of propaganda against Islam and Muslims in mainstream western media is not a new phenomenon. Studies in media or political discourse have revealed that the portrayals of Islam and Muslims in western media tends to emphasize stereotypes and discriminatory rhetoric, casting, as such, an unfavorable light on Muslims and Islam. The depiction of Islam and Muslims as a negative 'Other' for western societies and the general ill-formed and uninformed conceptions of Islam and Muslim are strongly attributed to the western media representations of Islam within two frames; "*in clash with the west and associated with terrorism/extremism or violence*" (Eid, 2014, p. 104). Language has always been a key factor in forming, constructing and later revealing the ill-formed perceptions of Islam and Muslims in westerners' minds. Reath (1998) asserted that language is a pivotal means in which "attitudes towards groups can be constructed, maintained or challenged" (p.54). Through a manipulative use of language and word choices, Muslims in western media have been irrationally portrayed as social deviants, irrational, backward, uncivilized, and as posing security threats to western societies. As part of the discourse on security and terrorism, "the association of Islam with terrorism and violence has come to be accepted, to the extent that terms such as "Muslim" and "terrorist" have become almost synonymous" (Eid & Karim, 2014, p.105).

Explicit and implicit allegations of Muslims as being accountable for any terrorist attacks occurring in the world have been vividly pronounced in media discourse post 9/11. According to Poorebrahim and Zarei (2012) "the image of Muslims as social deviants and security threats is being regenerated against the backdrop of the 'war on terror'. Heightened security concerns have made the Muslims community an easy target for an extraordinary level of media scrutiny" (conclusion, para.1). Due to this propaganda, many Islamic countries, especially Middle Eastern countries, have encountered considerable pressure for making new reforms and changes in their political and educational systems. Saudi Arabia, of instance, has faced considerable international and local pressures for change in recent years (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Because of the fear from producing more Islamic fundamentalists, and the fear of losing its strong connection with the White House, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has begun its first initial stage of introducing English and its culture to the primary schools (not previously taught at that stage) (Elyas, 2008).

#### 5. Conclusion

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Norway, some western media institutions made news coverage reports and published news articles in which Islam and Muslims were allegedly held accountable for the attacks. Using media discourse analysis, the present study linguistically analyzed a video report and a collection of biased news articles towards Islam and Muslims. The analyses revealed that these western media institutions used word choices, implicature, and modal expressions to hold Muslims accountable for the attacks. However, the tone of allegation varied dramatically from one article to another ranging from a mere suspicion to an overt accusation. The varying degrees of uncertainty or assertion of the authors' statements were reflected in the varied linguistic forms and devices used within the discourse.

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